IN THE CLAIMS

1.   (Previously Presented) A system for rebate processing, comprising:

a plurality of first devices associated with promotion sponsors, the first devices operable to communicate information describing promotions to a rebate processing center;

a plurality of second devices associated with consumers, the second devices operable to communicate information indicating purchases of products to the rebate processing center; and

the rebate processing center, comprising:

a first memory operable to store promotion information describing the promotions available for the purchases, the promotion information comprising, for each of the promotions, a promotion sponsor identifier indicating a selected one of the promotion sponsors, a promotion identifier, promotion requirements, and at least one disbursement option;

a second memory operable to store transaction information indicating the purchases of the products, the transaction information comprising, for each of the purchases, a consumer identifier, a rebate request status, and a promotion identifier matching to a selected one of the promotions; and

a processor operable to process rebate requests by associating the purchases with the promotions using the promotion identifiers and determining whether selected transaction information for the purchases satisfies the rebate requirements for the promotions, the processor further operable to provide rebate status updates to the consumers using the rebate request statuses and to generate promotion reports, a promotion report comprising selected promotion information for at least one of the promotions having a particular promotion sponsor identifier.

2.   (Previously Presented)   The system of Claim 1, wherein the promotion information comprises, for at least one of the promotions, a plurality of disbursement options for receiving an authorized rebate, at least one of the plurality of disbursement options having a cash value to a recipient different than another one of the plurality of disbursement options.

3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Original)   The system of Claim 1, wherein the second devices are further operable to output a rebate request form in a format suitable for mailing.

5.   (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 1, wherein at least one first device is operable to receive one of the promotion reports, the received promotion report comprising a number of rebate requests and a breakage rate for each promotion associated with a promotion sponsor.

6.   (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 1, wherein at least one second device is operable to receive one of the rebate status updates from the rebate processing center, the received rebate status update indicating the rebate request status for rebate requests submitted to the rebate processing center by a user of the second device.

7.   (Original)   The system of Claim 1, wherein at least one second device is operable to receive an authorization upon approval of a rebate request, the authorization having a plurality of selectable disbursement options.

8.   (Previously Presented) An apparatus for rebate processing, comprising:

a first memory operable to store promotion information describing a plurality of promotions, the promotion information comprising, for each of the promotions, a promotion sponsor identifier, a promotion identifier, promotion requirements, and at least one disbursement option;

a second memory operable to store transaction information indicating a plurality of product purchases, the transaction information comprising, for each of the purchases, a consumer identifier, a rebate request status, and a promotion identifier matching to a selected one of the promotions; and

a processor operable to process rebate requests by associating the product purchases with the promotions using the promotion identifiers and determining whether selected transaction information for the purchases satisfies the rebate requirements for the promotions, the processor further operable to provide rebate status updates to the consumers using the rebate request statuses and to generate promotion reports, a promotion report comprising selected promotion information for at least one of the promotions having a particular promotion sponsor identifier.

9.   (Original) The apparatus of Claim 8, further comprising an interface operable:

to receive promotion information from a plurality of promotion sponsors describing the promotions;

to receive transaction information from a plurality of consumers indicating the product purchases.

10.   (Original) The apparatus of Claim 9, wherein the interface is operable to receive information electronically using the Internet.

11.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 9, wherein the interface is operable to receive transaction information entered from a rebate request form mailed by a purchaser of a product.

12.   (Previously Presented)   The apparatus of Claim 8, further comprising an interface operable to communicate one of the promotion reports to a promotion sponsor in response to a request from the promotion sponsor.

13.   (Previously Presented)   The apparatus of Claim 8, further comprising an interface operable to communicate one of the promotion reports to a promotion sponsor, the communicated promotion report comprising a number of rebate requests and a breakage rate for each promotion associated with the promotion sponsor.

14.   (Original)   The apparatus of Claim 8, further comprising an interface to communicate an authorization to a consumer upon approving a rebate request, the authorization having a plurality of selectable disbursement options.

15.   (Canceled)

16.   (Previously Presented)   The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein at least one promotion comprises a plurality of disbursement options for receiving an authorized rebate, at least one of the plurality of disbursement options having a cash value to a recipient different than another one of the plurality of disbursement options.

17.   (Original)   The apparatus of Claim 16, wherein the disbursement options comprise a cash rebate and a credit voucher.

18.   (Original)   The apparatus of Claim 16, wherein at least one promotion comprises:
    a product identifier;
    an end date for the promotion; and
    a geographic target for the promotion.

19.   (Previously Presented)   The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein at least one transaction comprises:

personal information of the purchaser of the product; and

purchase information.

20.   (Previously Presented) A method for rebate processing, comprising:

storing promotion information describing a plurality of promotions, the promotion information comprising, for each of the promotions, a promotion sponsor identifier, a promotion identifier, promotion requirements, and at least one disbursement option;

storing transaction information indicating a plurality of product purchases, the transaction information comprising, for each of the purchases, a consumer identifier indicating one of the consumers and a promotion identifier matching to a selected one of the promotions;

processing rebate requests by associating the product purchases with the promotions using the promotion identifiers, wherein processing a rebate request for a selected one of the purchases comprises determining whether transaction information for the selected purchase satisfies the rebate requirements for the promotion indicated by the promotion identifier for the selected purchase;

providing rebate status updates to the consumers using the rebate request statuses; and

generate promotion reports, a promotion report comprising selected promotion information for at least one of the promotions having a particular promotion sponsor identifier.

21.   (Original) The method of Claim 20, further comprising:

receiving, from a plurality of promotion sponsors, promotion information describing the promotions; and

receiving, from a plurality of consumers, transaction information indicating the product purchases.

22.   (Original)   The method of Claim 21, wherein the steps of receiving are performed electronically using the Internet.

23.   (Original) The method of Claim 21, further comprising the step of receiving transaction information entered from a rebate request form mailed by a purchaser of a product.

24.   (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 21, further comprising:

receiving a request from a promotion sponsor for a status of promotions associated with the promotion sponsor;

determining a promotion sponsor identifier for the promotion sponsor;

generating a promotion report for at least one of the promotions associated with the determined promotion sponsor identifier; and

communicating the generated promotion report to the promotion sponsor.

25.   (Previously Presented)   The method of Claim 24, wherein the generated promotion report comprises a number of rebate requests and a breakage rate for each promotion associated with the promotion sponsor.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 20, further comprising:

approving a rebate request;

communicating an authorization to a consumer upon approving the rebate request, the authorization having a plurality of disbursement options; and

receiving a selection of the disbursement options.

27.   (Canceled)

28.   (Previously Presented)   The method of Claim 20, wherein at least one promotion comprises a plurality of disbursement options for receiving an authorized rebate, at least one of the plurality of disbursement options having a cash value to a recipient different than another one of the plurality of disbursement options.

29.   (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 28, wherein the disbursement options comprise a cash rebate and a credit voucher.

30.   (Original)   The method of Claim 20, wherein at least one promotion comprises:

a product identifier;

an end date for the promotion; and

a geographic target for the promotion.

31.   (Previously Presented)   The method of Claim 20, wherein at least one transaction comprises:

personal information of the purchaser of the product; and

purchase information.

32.   (Previously Presented)   A computer-based interface for facilitating rebate processing, the interface operable to:

display a plurality of fields for entry by a user to create a promotion for a product bearing a rebate;

receive promotion information for the promotion, the promotion information comprising a product identifier and a plurality of disbursement options for receiving an authorized rebate, at least one of the disbursement options having a cash value to a recipient different than another one of the disbursement options;

communicate promotion information to a remote rebate processing center; and

receive a status of the promotion based on purchases of the product, the status indicating a number of rebate requests for the promotion and a number of authorized rebates fulfilled for each of the disbursement options for the promotion.

33.   (Canceled)

34.   (Amended) The computer-based interface of ~~Claim 33~~ Claim 32, wherein the disbursement options comprise a cash rebate and a credit voucher.

35.   (Original) The computer-based interface of Claim 32, wherein promotion information comprises:

a product identifier;

an end date for the promotion; and

a geographic target for the promotion.

36.   (Original) The computer-based interface of Claim 32, wherein the interface is operable to receive and communicate promotion information repeatedly to create a plurality of promotions for the remote rebate processing center.

37.   (Original) The computer-based interface of Claim 32, wherein the interface is web-based and is further operable to communicate promotion information and receive a status of the promotion electronically using the Internet.

38.   (Original) The computer-based interface of Claim 32, wherein the status of the promotion comprises:

a number of rebate requests; and

a breakage rate.

39.   (Canceled)

40. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for rebate processing, comprising:

a first memory operable to store promotion information describing a plurality of promotions, the promotion information comprising, for each of the promotions, a promotion sponsor identifier, a promotion identifier, a product identifier, at least one disbursement option, promotion status information comprising a total number of rebate requests and a breakage rate for the promotion, and a plurality of promotion requirements;

a second memory operable to store transaction information indicating a plurality of product purchases, the transaction information comprising, for each of the product purchases, product purchase information indicating a purchase date, consumer information for a consumer associated with the purchase, a rebate transaction identifier assigned in response to a request for a rebate received from the consumer, a rebate request status detailing current status of the request for the rebate, rebate request information indicating a rebate request materials submission date, and a promotion identifier matching to a selected one of the promotions; and

a processor operable to process rebate requests by associating the product purchases with the promotions using the promotion identifiers and determining whether selected transaction information for the purchases satisfies the promotion requirements for the promotions by verifying that the product purchase information and the rebate request information satisfy the promotion requirements, the processor further operable to provide rebate status updates to the consumers using the rebate request statuses and to generate promotion reports, a promotion report comprising selected promotion information for at least one of the promotions having a particular promotion sponsor identifier, the promotion report comprising the number of rebate requests and the breakage rate for each promotion.

41. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 40, further comprising an interface operable to communicate an authorization to a consumer upon approving a rebate request, the authorization having a plurality of selectable disbursement options.

42. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 40, wherein at least one promotion comprises a plurality of disbursement options for receiving an authorized rebate, at least one of the plurality of disbursement options having a cash value to a recipient different than another one of the plurality of disbursement options.

43.   (Previously Presented) An apparatus for rebate processing, comprising:

a first memory operable to store promotion information describing a plurality of promotions, the promotion information comprising, for each of the promotions, a promotion sponsor identifier, a promotion identifier, a product identifier, at least one disbursement option, and promotion requirements comprising a purchase date range, required materials, and a date requirement for submitting the required materials;

a second memory operable to store transaction information indicating a plurality of product purchases, the transaction information comprising, for each of the product purchases, product purchase information indicating a purchase date, consumer information for a consumer associated with the purchase, a rebate request status detailing current status of the request for the rebate, rebate request information indicating a required materials submission date, and a promotion identifier matching to a selected one of the promotions; and

a processor operable to process rebate requests by associating the product purchases with the promotions using the promotion identifiers and determining whether selected transaction information for the purchases satisfies the promotion requirements for the promotions, wherein determining whether the selected transaction information for the purchases satisfies the promotion requirements for the promotions comprises verifying that the purchase dates fall within the corresponding purchase date ranges, that the required materials have been submitted, and that the required materials submission dates satisfy the corresponding date requirements.

44.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 43, wherein the promotion requirements further comprise at least one of a retailer requirement and a geographic zone.

45.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 43, wherein the required materials comprise a proof of purchase.

46.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus of Claim 43, wherein the second memory is further operable, for each of the product purchases, to maintain a rebate transaction identifier assigned in response to an initial request for a rebate received from the consumer, and wherein the required materials comprise a rebate request form indicating the rebate transaction identifier.